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THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.



THE STYLE OF THE FUTURE.

BY W. N. LOCKINGTON.

WE are living in a period of transition. Our civilization is but the inchoate commencement of a new order of things, coupled with the debris of mediævalism. We boast, in the pulpit and the rostrum, in books and in newspapers, in public and in private, of the material progress of the nineteenth century, and we have reason, for that progress is titanic. We have harnessed steam, we conduct electricity whither we wish, we have ransacked the earth's surface for productions we think we need, we have mined deep for hidden treasures, we have cut through mountains, yet we are not happy—therefore we are civilized.

In what way are we the better for all these things? Is social life purer? Has man's trust in mankind increased? Are our homes more homelike, our lives more lovely? When this country achieved its independence railroads were not, telegraph and telephones were dreams, much of the earth was untravelled, we had no steamboats, we bored no tunnels. Yet in what are we better than our revolutionary fathers? Have the social virtues notably increased since their day, is life more worth living than it was a century since?

If these questions cannot be answered in the affirmative, then it must be acknowledged either that our great material progress is useless to mankind, or that it has not yet ripened its fruit.

The latter is the truth. We have not retrogressed. There has been no extinction of old lights, only the addition of new ones. But in the glitter and glare of our electric arcs, and the hurry of our steam-wafted movements, we have forgotten the great needs of our nature. Our inventions are too much for us, we live for them, they rule us. Mankind is the slave of his successes. Lives that might have been happy, or at least peaceful, are beaten out to the rhythm of the steam engine, are trampled on in the ceaseless race for wealth.

Such transitional periods have occurred before in the history of our race-civilization. The period from the successes of Alexander to the supremacy of Rome was one such; that which intervened between the decay of the Roman power and the establishment of the feudal system was another; the Revival

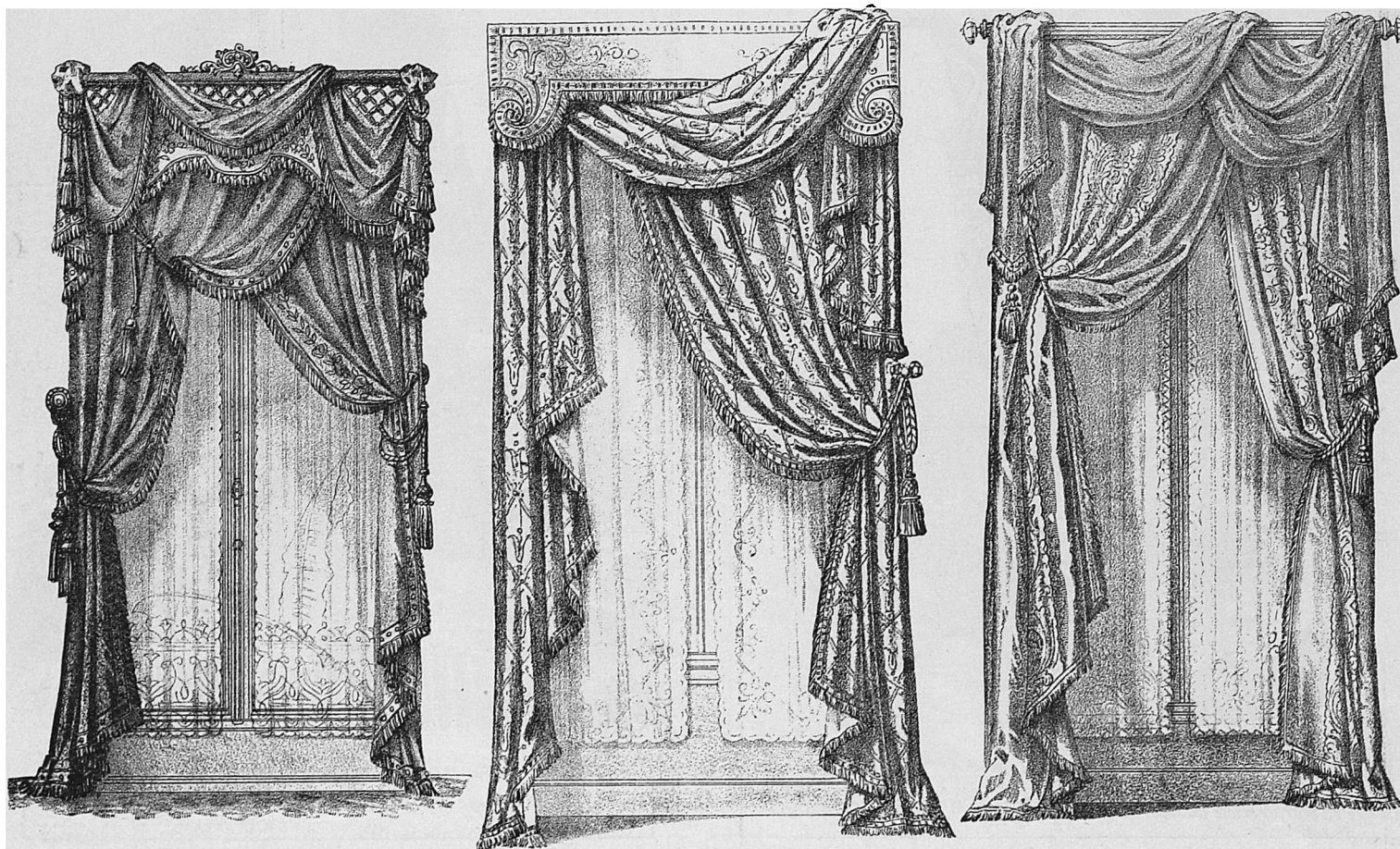
was a third, short and sharp—more a cataclysm than a period; yet not so deep or so complete as that in which we live.

The civilizations of Nineveh, Egypt, Greece and Rome were each complete in their kind; each of these nations had thoroughly assimilated the knowledge of the age, and utilized it for its own benefit. The buildings and other works of art, as well as articles that cannot be considered works of art, were the reflex of the religion and the modes of life of the nation. The same may be said of mediæval times. The two chief characteristics of that age were intense piety and devotion to the church on the one hand, and submissive loyalty to the feudal lord upon the other; and these find expression in the aspiring lines of the cathedral and the solid masses of the castle. Even the commercial city had its feudal lord, and heraldry was as rife in Bruges or London as in Amiens or Warwick. The revival of ancient art and the Reformation came together and a new civilization followed, that of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

A sleepy century was the eighteenth in all matters of art. The Revival had lost its force, the forms of ancient art were dropped, taste was almost dead. But though a century of decadence, it was one of transition. The lack of art everywhere evident was the true expression of the habits of the people. Their homes and all their buildings spoke of quiet comfort.

During the past fifty years all this has changed. Discovery has succeeded discovery, and invention invention, until we have almost lost our heads, until nervous diseases, induced by our endless worryings, shorten our lives and harass what is left of them. If in spite of all this the average length of life has increased, it is because among our discoveries have been many which teach us how to avoid material sources of disease. Our needs have doubled, aye, quadrupled. The poorest of us counts among the necessities of life things which kings could not command a century ago. Yet the true necessities of life—food, clothing, shelter, are lacking all the same to many. The unrest and change of the times has been as evident in art as elsewhere. It was not in the nature of things that men should rest content with the prosy formalities of the days of Anne and the Georges, or the inanities of Louis XV. And thus it came to pass that the styles of past ages were again studied and one by one tried and thrown aside as inadequate for the purpose.

First came the rage for all that was Grecian, our homes were made in the similitude of a Greek temple, since we knew not how the Greeks built their homes; our churches took on the same similitude, and our public buildings shrouded their unfitness behind Doric or Corinthian peristyles. To this followed the Palladian revival, and to this the Gothic. At one time it seemed as though our nineteenth century Material Progress would perforce be clothed in the ill-fitting mantle of mediævalism, but the young giant shook it off, and it remained resting only on the limbs of the Church, which crouched at his feet. The classic



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style, as interpreted by Palladio, Sansovino and other artists of the later period of the former Revival, still subsists also, but a new movement is at work. Queen Anneism has been and gone. The name meant nothing, the manner was unlike anything executed in Queen Anne's day, but it was the commencement of a rebellion against Classic and Gothic alike—the first protest against following any style. The prevailing tendency is now to mix and mingle styles, taking from each that which is deemed appropriate.

This admixture is not always well done. It is not every Gothic detail that will harmonize with an Italian framework, nor will Classic detail always fit gracefully among Gothic lines. The combination must be so well wrought out that the eye is not conscious of the separate origin of the different parts, they must be wedded as dexterously as the colors which the painter puts on his canvas to imitate the human flesh. Too often not only is the combination ill done, but the colors—*i. e.*, the details—are impure. They reveal the fact that the decorator or architect who uses them is ignorant of the styles from which he attempts to borrow, and they bear to the commixture of the true creative artist the relation that the crude coloring of a child bears to the production of a skilled worker at the palette.

There is just now a chaos of styles. Gothic—Early English, Decorated, Perpendicular, Flamboyant, Classic—Greek, Roman, Palladian, are in use along with all the varied phases of the Renaissance, as they showed themselves in different countries, with forms of Romanesque, with Byzantine, even with a smack of Saracenic. But the pure styles are relegated to certain classes of structures, for which they have become the conventional expression, while the mixed styles are becoming more and more general in all ordinary street architecture.

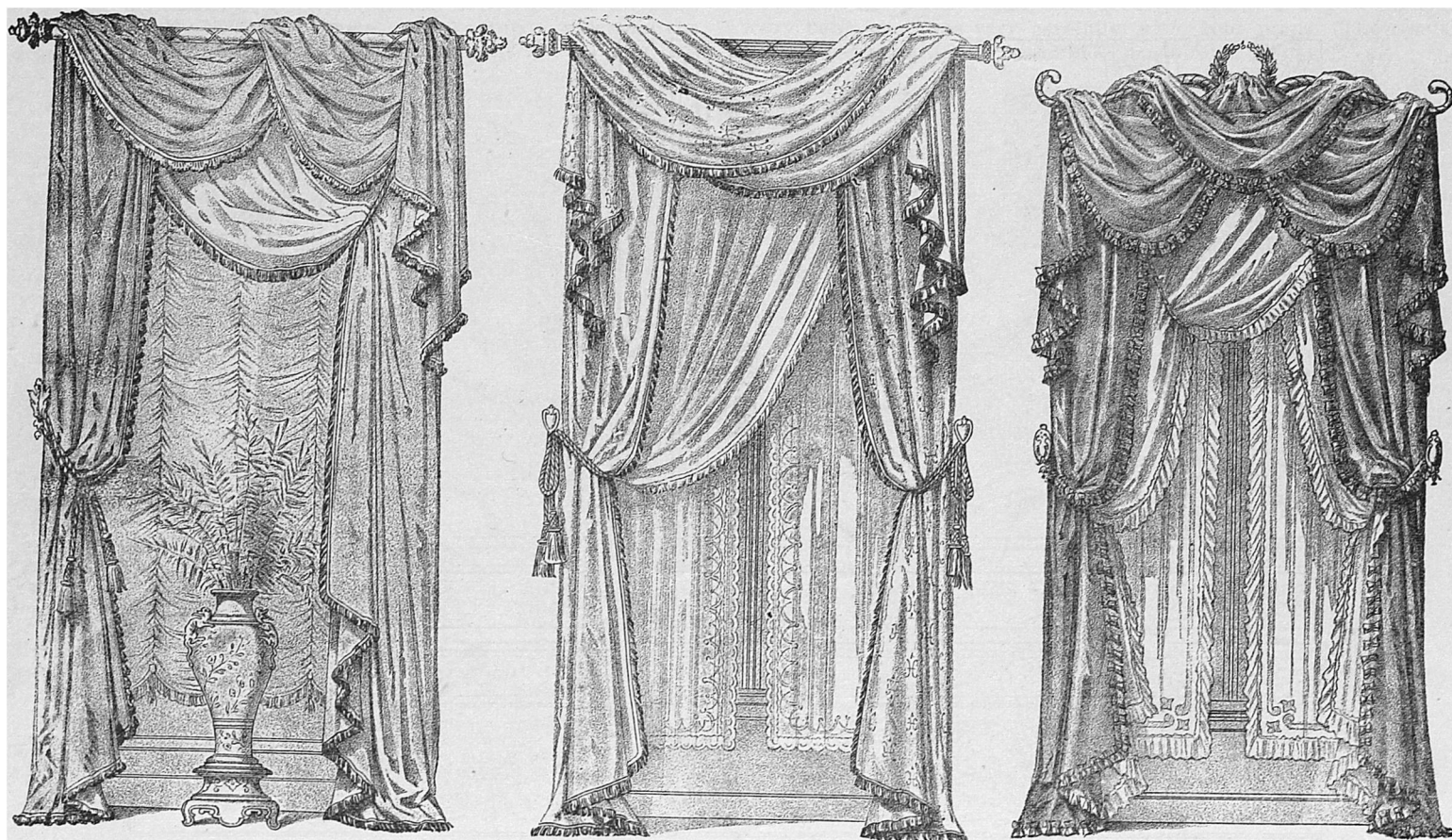
The needs of modern life, the story over story of our houses, and still more of our apartment houses and business blocks, necessitates the predominance of the horizontal line over the perpendicular, and this, since the horizontal line is most prominent in pure Classic and the vertical in pure Gothic, perforce imprints a Classic facie's upon most modern buildings. Terra cotta, a favorite material of the Italian artists of the quato-cento, has again come into use, and lends itself gracefully to paneling filled with flowing ornament, to decorated arches and soffits, and to broad flat architraves and friezes full of arabesques. Thus it comes to pass that, spite of all the admixture of Gothic in some cases, of pure Classic in others, and in others even of Moorish, the *tout-ensemble* of the greater part of our best modern street architecture recalls the epoch of the Renaissance, as it was manifested in Italy, France, Flanders, or England, rather than that of any preceding age.

There has been a passing "craze" for Japanese, resulting in an enlargement of our decorative ideas, yet, if a vaticination of our future style of architecture and decoration may be hazarded in the present inchoate state of things, it seems probable that it will incline rather toward the Classical than toward the Gothic,

that it will be a style of broad windows with square, segmental or semi-circular heads, of projecting cornices, string courses, and flat bands of decoration, of recessed loggias and arched porticos, of decorated gables and tall dormers of brick or stone, and of lofty chimneys. With these features—features almost commanded by modern needs—the style of the future must bear some resemblance to the styles which immediately preceded the revival of the orders. In these styles the classic feeling predominates, but there is a reminiscence of the medieval; to this we shall add *motifs* of Moorish, Hindoo, Japanese, etc., and thus evolve a plastic style, in which shall be embodied whatever of form, of ornament, or of color all previous styles can yield that is fitted to give expression to modern needs.

The Renaissance was the outcome of the period of transition which immediately preceded our own—its various manners were the results of the independent attempts of the various European races to evolve a style which should give expression to the needs of their age. Fairly successful among all the western nations, it was killed by the study of the five orders, and the renewal of reverence for the great name of Rome. We can take it up where the artists of pre-Palladian times dropped it. Of all previous methods of house-adornment, exterior and interior, that of the Renaissance comes nearest to our needs, for it was the outcome of a civic life which more nearly resembled our own than any which preceded it. Indeed, what have we of house architecture, of street architecture, previous to the Renaissance? Nothing from Greece, a few eruption-preserved fragments from Rome, and a tolerably full series from the days when every house was in the shadow of castle or cathedral—this is all the western world yields to us previous to the abundance of domestic structures which were erected in the early Revival. Egypt and Nineveh, Greece and even old Rome, are dead to us; their needs are not ours, we scarcely know, save in the case of Rome, how their peoples lived, and we know we live not as the Romans did. China and Japan can give us nothing helpful in form or arrangement, grateful though we may be to the latter for surface decoration, the bracket capital is all we can acquire from the Hindoo, and the Saracenic, full of *motifs* for the decoration of flat surfaces though it is, has little to add to our exteriors save an occasional capital or horseshoe arch. But the burghers and gentlemen of the Renaissance are our nearest of kin, they lived in stirring times like unto ours, they moved in an age which saw the invention of printing, the discovery of a New World, and the revival of learning and of religion, and it is in the art-productions of their age that we shall find most ideas fit for use in ours.

NEW CARD PLATES.—These are closely imitative of cloisonne work in gold and colors, and have composition gems, imitative of real gems, interspersed in the designs. In some of these there is a sprinkling of simulated turquoise stones, with large, deep hued carbuncles disposed at regular intervals on the rim.



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